

The new girl at school was almost too good to be true: smart, pretty, and totally down-to-earth. And, dude, get this—she loved to get high. A total stoner. L. Christopher Smith reveals how a twentysomething junior deceived an entire town and brought a school to its knees



***UNDERCOVER**

AS SOON AS the police cruisers pulled onto the field, Mary Beth Morgan bolted for the woods. She was wearing her nicest outfit—a black silk one-shoulder dress she'd chosen especially for Milford High's homecoming dance. It was not the sort of weather to be running around in a flimsy dress—it felt like ten degrees on that clear October night in the Ohio Valley—but this was Mary Beth's first big party at Milford, and she wanted to fit in. So she gamely huddled against the cold amid the pines and the oaks and waited for the cops to leave.

Mary Beth was a junior transfer student from an industrial town upstate, now enrolled in a school of more than 1,800 students. She'd spent the past two months trying to crack into Milford High's inner circle, and the fact that she was at Cy Gardner's afterparty was incontrovertible evidence that she was making progress. A big, densely muscled prep beloved by stoners and jocks alike, Cy was famous for the outdoor bacchanals he threw on the twenty acres of land his family owned on the outskirts of town. Tonight's party was massive: There must have been at least a hundred kids gathered around a keg and a bonfire. Then the cops showed up, and everyone scattered.

Mary Beth had started the evening with Laura Mitchell, one of the few girls she'd bonded with at her new school. On the quiet suburban street where Laura lived, bronze leaves carpeted the lawns in such a picturesque tableau it appeared as if the entire block had been art-directed. Laura's mother snapped photos of them on the lawn in front of the house—two slim, pretty blonds beaming with optimism, as much a part of this Cincinnati suburb as the town's First Methodist Church, the oldest in Ohio. For a laugh, they joined Laura's friends at Hooters before the dance, ten or so extravagantly done-up high school girls, digging into chicken wings served by big-breasted waitresses in short shorts.

As soon as the dance ended, they headed for the party. Now Mary Beth was crouched in the woods, hiding with some kids from a nearby school. When the cops finally took off, Mary Beth emerged from the trees, her dress torn in three places, pine needles in her hair. She was miserable—and cold. So she settled in close to the bonfire while other kids got back to drinking from the keg

they'd stashed in the woods. Soon the music was blasting from car stereos and the party was back on.

Before long, kids were drunkenly leaping through the bonfire. Somewhere someone was throwing up. Somewhere someone was getting laid. And everyone, it seemed, was getting high. Mary Beth lost track of Laura among the kids staggering around in the darkness, and she ended up talking with Bryan Florer, a skinny boy she'd bought pot from a week earlier. He was even more wasted than the fire jumpers and repeatedly tried to kiss her. Mary Beth was grateful when Cy arrived.

"I heard you're really cool," Cy said. "You like to smoke pot? We'll have to get high sometime."

The party raged until the early hours. Mary Beth hung out until people started crashing; then she climbed into her car and tried to get some sleep. At six thirty she woke up to a postparty war zone—cigarette butts and crushed plastic cups fossilized in the mud, an empty keg lying on its side. There were probably fifty frost-covered cars parked in the field. Mary Beth pulled out a pen, grabbed a homework assignment from the floor of her Saturn, and copied down the license-plate numbers of every car there.

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JOHN FRYE KNEW Milford High School had a drug problem. Frye is the superintendent of Milford Exempted Village School District, and when he first started hearing whispers of "a lot of pot passing" at Milford, he was alarmed. When he heard from parents that their kids were getting accosted by drug-dealing teens on their way to class, he set out to strike a blow for the safety of our schools.

"I want people to know that we are not going to say, 'Yeah, we've got a drug problem' and 'Yeah, it's too much for us to handle,'" says Frye. "We are not going to turn

★ *Clockwise from left, Becky Susman, Rachel Newsome, Mary Beth, Jamie Allison, Stefani Bruce, and Christy Krill at a Milford High home football game.*

GIRL



over our school to be run by drug dealers." So he contacted North American Security Solutions, a Dayton-based firm that had run a successful undercover bust at a high school upstate, and arranged for an agent to attend Milford High. For \$60,000 he would have a trained agent infiltrate Milford's druggie crowd and root out the delinquents. There were risks: No one knew how wide Milford's drug circles ran, how many big dealers were involved, or how dangerous they could be. So besides Frye, only three people would know about the investigation: the school-board president, the local police chief, and his lieutenant. Not a single teacher or administrator was told that a narc would be enrolled at his school, not even the principal.



MARY BETH MORGAN spent part of the summer of 2004 reenacting the drug experience she'd never had in high school. She had been a standout student and a gifted athlete who never once smoked pot. At the offices of North American Security Solutions, she was drilled on how to buy drugs and how to take them. "I didn't even know how to draw a line of coke when I came here," Mary Beth says. "And I was the joke of my training class when it came to rolling joints." Each night after work, she'd go home and practice rolling in front of the TV.

Her parents had hoped she'd become a teacher, but Mary Beth (which is not her real name) had gotten hooked on law enforcement during high school after going on ride-alongs with a friend's father, a local cop. You could say it's why she didn't pursue a desk job with the local police after she graduated with a degree in criminal justice. (From where, she won't say.) An office job would have driven her batty. Mary Beth yearned to work for the DEA or the Secret Service, but it can take years to get a job with those agencies. In the meantime, she'd try going undercover for North American.

Mary Beth was a natural at fooling people. During one of her initial training excursions, she was able to persuade a guy she met in a bar to sell her a pound of pot. And she had no problem lying. The only thing that troubled her about undercover work was the wire she wore taped to her back. Sometimes it would get so hot it burned her skin.

The other key to her success is her every-girl appearance. She's just a little slip of a girl in her twenties with long blond hair and an open, wholesome face. She could pass for anyone—the sister of a friend, the new marketing assistant, an unexceptional high school kid from a small town in northwestern Ohio. It was one of the chief reasons her supervisors selected Mary Beth for the Milford job on the very day she

finished her training. For her first job out of college, Mary Beth would be going back to high school.

By August she was in Milford, only an hour's drive south of Dayton, but for Mary Beth a different world completely. A town of some 6,000, it serves as the hub of Miami Township, a wide-open expanse intersected by no fewer than four highways, among them Interstate 275, the main artery for southwestern Ohio and the engine behind the township's suburban sprawl. Where once stood woods, there are now massive shopping centers, fast-food chains, and housing divisions that regard beige brick as a kind of edict. Right away she could tell it was the sort of place where the chief adolescent pastimes revolved around getting drunk and getting high.

North American furnished her with a dossier that established her cover as the only child of a nomadic salesman—played by her supervisor, Doug Morgan. She had a fake high school transcript drawn up that allowed her to enroll as a junior. Her real driver's license was locked in a safe, and she was issued a freshly minted license that displayed her new name, Mary Beth Morgan, and her new age, 17. Mary Beth was clueless about how she was going to pass herself off as 17, so she did what any other 17-year-old girl would do on an August afternoon: She went to the mall.

Her appearance was a primary concern. Mary Beth and Doug decided that she should opt for jeans and a sweatshirt, a look that was neutral enough to let her adapt to almost any clique and which would help make her look younger. Moreover, Mary Beth wanted to avoid any accusations of sexual entrapment. (Her cover included an out-of-town boyfriend for just that reason.) "I wasn't going there to get boys to like me," she says. She was going there to buy drugs.

And then suddenly, there was Milford High. The sheer size of the place was daunting. The industrial-white corridors had been given feel-good names like Unity Lane and Respect Avenue, but they didn't help Mary Beth navigate the mazelike hallways. She wondered how she'd ever find the school drug dealers when she couldn't even find her way to Spanish 1.

Rachel Newsome would be her guide and her in. A relentlessly cute senior Mary Beth had met in gym class, Rachel was Milford's one-girl Welcome Wagon.

RACHEL NEWSOME: I was like, "Look at this cute, quiet girl," and I started talking to her because she didn't have any friends. She said she dreaded going to lunch because she didn't have any friends to sit with. And I thought, "Oh. My. God." So I started introducing her to people.

One night in September, Mary Beth went to a Milford Eagles home football game with Rachel and a group of bubbly girls that included a pretty blond named Jamie Allison. And Jamie knew *everyone*.

"See those guys over there?" Mary Beth recalls Jamie saying as she drove past a car show on the way to the game. "That one's Bryan. He's a pothead. And that's Alex. He's a pothead, too." Mary Beth gazed out the car window, connecting the names to the faces. These were the boys she wanted to meet, and sure enough, Jamie would arrange that as well. That Monday, Mary Beth joined Jamie for lunch, and there at their table were Bryan and Alex—along with a bunch of other senior guys, all of whom loved getting wasted. "I felt like I'd struck gold," Mary Beth recalls. "For a week, I just listened to them talk about smoking bowls and about the parties they had on the weekends. I called Doug and said, 'I'm in.'"

Still, Mary Beth knew not to rush. She kept quiet and zeroed in on a quiet Phishhead named Neil Nash, who seemed less rowdy than the others. Maybe he could tell her where a Milford girl could score some drugs.

For those first few weeks, Mary Beth mainly took notes—which she e-mailed each night to her manager, Doug—and tried her best to act like your average teenager. She charted the travails of Marissa and Seth on *The OC* and tried to get with the adolescent decadence of *Laguna Beach*. Rachel took her to the mall, where they shopped

for jeans at Express. Gradually, Mary Beth morphed into her role; she let her hair grow out and started writing in the big, loopy script high school girls adore. She picked up the local idiom, dropping words like *sweet* and *ghetto* into conversations. She made herself conversant in the lingua franca of text messaging and watched nightly reruns of *The Simpsons*, every stoner's favorite reference bank. By September's end, the transformation was nearly complete. Mary Beth was a teenager again—a laid-back teenager who was friendly to everyone and doodled marijuana leaves on her notebook. Jeff Rietman, a polite kid in her art class who was depressed about breaking up with his girlfriend, spotted her drawing. She says he asked her, "Do you get high?"

"Well, yeah," she replied. "Do you know where I could get some pot?"

He did—sort of. "Jeff said he didn't do drugs, but he had a lot of friends who did," Mary Beth recalls. "I had been there for about a month, and I wasn't producing. So anyone who offered to find me drugs, I took them up on it."

They arranged to meet in a parking lot near the school soccer field. It was a little public for a drug deal, but Mary Beth was more concerned about the price. Sixty-five dollars was too much for an eighth, and it was crucial that she not appear gullible, so she haggled mightily until she got them down to \$60. But everything was cool as they stepped out of their cars and into the autumn-afternoon sun. What's more, Neil

By contrast, Rachel and her friends proved to be a dead end drugwise, and Mary Beth began to phase out of their orbit later in the fall. "I wasn't going to spend two hours with them when I knew it wasn't going to lead anywhere," Mary Beth says. But her new friends worried that Mary Beth was running with the wrong crowd and hanging out with kids who lived for getting high. Becky Susman invited her to Young Life, a low-key Christian organization she and Rachel belonged to, but Mary Beth never came. Even so, the girls prayed for her.

As Mary Beth had hoped, Neil hooked her up with Bryan, who spoke in a thick stoner patois and seemed to have a permanently delayed reaction. Bryan assured Mary Beth he could get her any drug she wanted.

BRYAN FLORER: Mary Beth came in and acted like a complete burnout. I was thinking, "Hey, she's the new chick. She could be hot." She was hanging out with people in our group, so we figured she must be okay. We were like, "Oh, you're a new student. Want to be our friend?"

When she bought an eighth from him at his house soon thereafter, Bryan asked her to stick around and get high, but Mary Beth gave him the same spiel she'd soon be giving to dozens of other kids whenever they invited her to smoke weed or drop X or eat mushrooms with them: She'd always say she was on her way out of town to meet her

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was there with Jeff and a friend named Todd Riethmiller.

"I didn't know you smoked weed," Neil told her.

She was elated—this was her first buy—but her spirits sank when she spotted a Miami Township cruiser pull into the lot, a blue-and-white Crown Vic that circled them like a shark. Only two of the local cops knew about Mary Beth; a bust could have put an end to the whole operation right then and there.

So the group sped off and made the exchange on a quiet subdivision street called Apple Blossom, where Jeff passed her the pot. Mary Beth had finally conducted her first deal, and she established a natural connection with Neil, the boy she'd been trying to get to.



boyfriend or her dad or her cousin. In reality, she was heading home to dash off a report about the drug buy she'd just completed.

Such was the nature of Mary Beth's double life. She never invited students to her place—in a sagging apartment complex at the bottom of a ravine—lest they discover a one-bedroom filled with unpacked boxes and bereft of any fatherly presence. Instead, she'd meet kids at the nearby Steak 'n Shake. Not even her parents knew the nature of her assignment: "On long weekends, I'd go home to my parents' house, but mainly I would stay in my apartment and work on reports. I went to the gym a lot to keep myself from going crazy."



MARY BETH'S TASK was to never get too involved with the students while letting them think she was deeply involved. She would listen to their troubles with an empathetic nod but offered them little in return. Mainly, she was a blank slate upon which Milford's students could project anything they wanted. And what the girls wanted was a fixer-upper—someone who needed a little bit of help. Even the most popular girls need someone who makes them feel better about themselves.

BECKY SUSMAN: "We felt bad for Mary Beth. She wore glasses and big sweatshirts all the time—I mean, shit. You know?"

RACHEL NEWSOME: "She never wore any makeup. And she had plain long hair."

JAMIE ALLISON: "She wasn't chatty or gossipy like other girls."

CHRISTY KRILL: "She was not attractive. Mary Beth was quiet. She was weird. She was Rachel's charity case. She would always talk about how much she liked to party, but when we went out, she didn't want to drink or do anything. I thought she was full of shit."

What the boys were looking for was a girl who could hang, some evidence that the opposite sex wasn't comprised wholly of alien, totally desirable creatures who bored them silly and scared them shitless.

CY GARDNER: "She was just lookin' to party. She seemed like a real nice girl."

BRYAN FLORER: "She dressed like a chill chick. Like she really didn't give a shit, which is pretty much my style. She seemed like any other high school girl who liked to smoke pot."

JEFF RIETMAN: "She was easy to talk to. She was down-to-earth—not full of herself. At the time, I was just happy to have somebody to talk to at school."

DREW JOHNSON: "I was always checking her out in these tight Ohio State gym shorts she wore. I would try to get her to skip class with me and stuff, but when it came down to do it, she was never around."



The biggest challenge was enduring the tedium of adolescent life—"listening to them talk about burping and farting and what color to paint their nails."

ANDREW GOODPASTOR: "On the way to homecoming, she told me she wasn't wearing any panties."

During that first semester, Mary Beth's drug network was expanding all the time. One morning in biology, she introduced herself to Andy Burton, another huge partyer, who she says tried to impress her with dubious stories about doing lines of coke off his desk in class. One day he passed her a sheet of notebook paper, a menu for various grades of pot that ranged from cut-rate "middles" to premium "nuggets" available by the ounce. But Mary Beth wasn't after large quantities of drugs; she was after kids like Andy, who sold her pot a few weeks later. She kept a copy of his list to use as evidence against him.

And then there was Cy: For Mary Beth, the best thing to come out of Cy Gardner's homecoming party was a friendship with Cy himself. Virtually overnight, she was let into his circle of stoner friends. In the hallways, they called out, "Hey! What's up?" and exchanged high fives with her. They even gave her a time-honored nickname for stoner chicks everywhere: Mary Jane. Mary Beth no longer had to go searching for people to sell her drugs. She was known as a solid customer, and kids like Cy came right up to her in the hallways or in class and offered to get her whatever she wanted.

And Cy begot Alex, a senior with the insouciant look of a dressed-down rich kid, who turned Mary Beth on to the anti-anxiety medication Klonopin. He said it tasted like bananas when snorted. One time when he was tripping on mushrooms, he told her, he could have sworn pictures were dancing on the walls. Mary Beth had never

done them herself, but she quickly adopted Alex's story as her own 'shroom anecdote, sharing it with other kids as a badge of experience. Alex sold her two Klonopin pills at school, then some pot outside Kyle Dewitt's house. Kyle was infamous. He walked around with a huge white-boy Afro and had allegedly "smoked himself stupid" by the end of freshman year. "Everyone was always saying I could get drugs from him," Mary Beth says. "But he would never give me the time of day. I was always paranoid that he knew something."



FITTING IN WITH the high school crowd turned out to be easier than she ever imagined. But the more success she had, the more she worried that students were onto her. She'd panic if a kid froze her out. And there were the dreams, full-on nightmares really, in which a deal went bad and some kid would try to harm her.

"There were times when I would call Doug and say, 'I think they know who I am,'" she recalls.

Mary Beth had to be careful. There were a number of things she had to keep in check. One was her athletic prowess. "In gym class, I knew my body was different from the other girls', but I tried to compensate," she says. She would hold back on the running track to stay with the rest of the class. And she had to constantly dumb herself down. "The first two months, I got straight A's. And I got a phone call from my manager telling me I had to bring it down a few notches," Mary Beth says. "That was probably one of the hardest things for me. I was always taught to get good grades, to get a good job—you know, be successful," she

adds. "I got really good at not doing homework." Mary Beth started affecting a stoner haze in class, saying "Whaaa?" whenever a teacher called upon her.

But perhaps the biggest challenge was enduring the daily tedium of adolescent life. "There was no substance to these kids' conversations," she says. "I'd get fatigued listening to them talk about burping and farting and what color they were going to paint their nails that night. Sometimes I'd need a couple days off just to gather my thoughts."

At least she was getting the job done. By the spring, Mary Beth had fully established her stoner credentials as someone who liked to buy eighths and always had exact change. Moreover, she had compiled a list of some thirty students who she believed made up a good chunk of Milford's drug crowd, and she'd bought mushrooms, Klonopin, Ecstasy, and enough weed to supply a college dorm.



EARLY ON THE MORNING of April 1, 2005, Mary Beth and Doug joined a group of Miami Township police officers in a fleet of blue-and-white cruisers and unmarked sedans that arrived at Milford High just after the start of first period. While around ten police officers gathered in the auditorium, Mary Beth and Doug met the school's principal, Ray Bauer, who'd learned two days earlier that he'd had an undercover agent in his school. He gave lists of students' names to administrators, who fanned out and began pulling kids out of class.

Milford's students were busy swapping spring-break pictures and planning what was left of the school year. Prom was coming up, and graduation was just two months away. They were coasting. Then, from their classroom windows, they saw the main parking lot fill with cops.

By now the auditorium was a virtual processing center. Students were informed of the charges against them and were arrested on the spot. Standing in the back was Mary Beth, who had exchanged her usual jeans and sweatshirt for a black skirt, heels, and a neat conservative blouse. As she watched her former friends be read their rights, she "tried not to think about what was going on. I did my job," she says. "They sold me illegal drugs, and they shouldn't have done that."

By third period, the school's parking lot was crawling with news vans as cameramen angled to capture the students, some of them in handcuffs, as they were led out to a waiting police van. And there was Jeff in Reebok shorts and flip-flops, and Kyle with his Mars Volta hair.

Principal Bauer made an announcement on the PA around one o'clock, but by then most of the school already knew that seventeen students had been arrested. (Six more were expelled a week later.) What they didn't know, and what Bauer

also told them, was that the bust came out of an investigation conducted by an undercover agent at Milford High School. To which the collective student response was: What the fuck?

But Jamie Allison knew. Jamie had been allowed to leave school at noon to go to her part-time job and, on her way out, had found Mary Beth standing near the main entrance with two police officers. It was the skirt that gave her away. For a moment, the two of them simply stared at each other while Jamie came to the realization that the shy, awkward girl she'd introduced to her friends back in September, the girl they'd all pitied, wasn't really a teenager at all.



FEDERAL LAW-ENFORCEMENT officials don't keep records of high school drug busts, but the operation at Milford High ranks as one of the most highly public cases in recent years. In an April 2005 visit to Cincinnati, the White House drug czar, John Walters, applauded Milford's creative approach to stemming teen drug abuse. "I don't think there is any alternative," Walters said. "What are you going to do? Leave drugs in the schools? Nobody wants that. We've had thirty years of watching young people suffer."

In the weeks following the arrests, the story was cast as a huge victory in the war on drugs. The *Cincinnati Enquirer's* op-ed pages claimed that Mary Beth "deserved a medal," and Milford superintendent John Frye was hailed as a "courageous" risk taker. A series of positive news reports about the operation were even credited with boosting interest in local real estate. But community reaction was mixed, with some parents wondering what, if anything, had been accomplished. "What kind of gestapo tactics are being employed to 'nab' a paltry amount of drugs?" asked one area resident in the *Enquirer*. He added: "Are [students'] lives going to be sacrificed to create some sort of scare tactic?"

Milford's kids weren't running scared—students told me drug use after the arrests continued unabated—and so they lashed out at the woman they now referred to as "a bitch," "a dyke," "a ho," and "a backstabber." Rumors circulated that Mary Beth had smoked pot with several kids, that she had dropped acid with Jared Schwartz, that she had had sex with someone at Cy's party. One lawyer claimed that Mary Beth had used her feminine wiles to entrap his client: "What teenage boy wouldn't want to give a girl what she asked for?"

Superintendent Frye insists he didn't set out to ruin any lives, but the sting he set up certainly messed with some futures. Cy, Bryan, and Jeff were charged with drug trafficking as juveniles—a felony offense to which they all pleaded guilty. Among the bust's other casualties was Jason Sorrell, a

* CAN YOU SPOT THE NARC?

Mary Beth isn't the first adult to pass herself off as a high school kid in the name of law enforcement. In Los Angeles alone, officers have been posing as students for more than thirty years, busting kids for drugs and for selling guns. And even though Mary Beth (above, with Laura Mitchell) exhibited only a few of the following traits, most high school narcs show the same telltale signs.

THE BABY FACE

Often plucked right out of the police academy for their youthful appearance, these cops have more in common with Gary Coleman than with Donnie Brasco. And if they look a little long in the tooth, they resort to creative work: In 1997, one 50-year-old officer reportedly explained his receding hairline and wrinkles as the result of steroids.

A GOOD BUTT

Apparently, things haven't changed much since *Rebel Without a Cause*. Smoking cigarettes still gets you in with the peeps, and narcs are usually holding. One undercover officer in Oakville, Ontario, reputedly sold cigarettes to teenagers at reduced rates in order to promote his back-butt image.

AN AIR OF MYSTERY

If your new best friend is a transfer student from a town you've never heard of and who lives with his "uncle" and can't stop talking about getting high, it's time to make new friends. Undercover narcs are almost always introduced as transfer students, and their home lives tend to be suspiciously inaccessible.

21 HUMP STREET

A snug half-shirt or the sight of a creeping thong can prove deadly for horny high school drug dealers, and female narcs—from Altoona, Pennsylvania, to Winnipeg, Ontario—have been accused of flaunting their assets on the job. Parents often complain that their sons were entrapped by feminine charms, a gripe known derisively among some prosecutors as the "pheromone defense," but occasionally they have a point: Sharon Fischer, an undercover LAPD officer, was fired after supposedly engaging in an "improper" relationship with a 17-year-old student.

WHEELS FOR DEALS

If you want to do drug deals, it helps to have a car. What do you think Spicoli was doing when he fell out of that van? The mother of one busted Angeleno explained her son's downfall at the hands of a narc to the *Los Angeles Times*: "He was wooed and wowed by her. She was a very flashy girl with a flashy car." —BRYAN THOMAS

member of Milford's DECA business program for academic superstars, who friends say lost a scholarship to Ohio University after being expelled for allegedly planning to sell pot to Mary Beth (his car had broken down on the way to the deal). Neil Nash and Todd Riethmiller, who had been in the car on the day of Mary Beth's first buy, were also expelled. (Neither Jason, Neil, nor Todd was arrested.) Ben Bradley was an honor student who wound up selling Mary Beth an eighth. His supposed plans to attend the police academy after graduation were promptly dashed. Jared Schwartz pleaded guilty to drug trafficking—he'd sold Mary Beth \$200 worth of Ecstasy—and was sentenced to six months of jail time. Then there was Jeff Rietman, the depressed kid from art class. His arrest proved to be such a psychic blow that immediately afterward he was put on suicide watch.

"This was like our 9/11," Brad Grant said a couple of days after Milford's graduation, "because these busts wiped out a whole chunk of our senior class."

Brad was sitting with a group of seniors in the backyard of a friend's house, smoking coconut-flavored shisha tobacco from a hookah. It was a warm, windless night, and the branches on the colossal oaks surrounding us hung perfectly still. With them was Todd, who'd just completed the online courses the expelled students could take in order to graduate. "Yup, today I finished high school," Todd said glumly.

Despite the buzz of graduation weekend, the main topic of conversation that night was the Bust. The boys talked about whose lives had been ruined the most, about who had done drugs with Mary Beth, and about how she didn't even catch some of the biggest users at school. "There were so many guys who didn't get caught," Becky Susman told me. It was her opinion that Mary Beth had targeted "some of the wrong people"—like Neil. "All he was doing was sitting in the back of the car."

But in the backyard that night, the boys' conversations sounded stilted and distrustful. "You know," Brad said, eyeing me as he exhaled a giant pull of shisha, "it would really suck if you were an undercover cop."



HERE SITS MARY BETH in plain black pants, a blouse, a long wrap sweater, and rimless glasses that are bookish but above all professional. Her face doesn't reveal much. It is indistinct, as if it's always in soft focus. Mary Beth rarely laughs, and her speech is full of law-enforcement jargon—terms like "during general conversation," which is agentspeak for "shooting the shit." She refers to her investigation at Milford High as simply "a task," one that she'd happily conduct again at another high school soon.

Mary Beth answers each question slowly, deliberately, as if this too were a task at

By now I have spoken with plenty of Milford students, all of whom know exactly what they'd say to Mary Beth if given the chance. They'd say, "Why? Why us?"



which she wanted to excel. These are her claims: that she never got high with a student, that she never had sex with a student, that she never consciously flirted with any boy and never discussed with anybody whether or not she was wearing panties. Indeed, she says she never did anything untoward, unprofessional. "I was constantly aware that I was an adult and they were juveniles," she says.

Mary Beth does not view herself as a foot soldier in the war on drugs. What kept her going, she says, was "gathering intelligence and buying drugs. It was as good an adrenaline rush as anything I experienced playing sports in high school." Along the way, she deceived dozens of kids, but she never let that bother her. "It was unfortunate that I had to lie," she says. "But that was just part of the job. I had been given a task, and I wanted to do it as well as I could."

Everything she did was simply part of her job—a high-profile victory in her first-ever investigation. She was pleased with the results "because the police department was pleased," she says. It was her job to "remain neutral" about the kids she helped bust. It wasn't her job to consider what happened to them afterward or how she had messed with their lives, their college plans, their families, as if somehow this relieved her of any responsibility. "It was unfortunate that these kids chose the path of drugs...but

ultimately it was their decision."

Only one student managed to engender Mary Beth's sympathy—a girl in her English class who was still going through rehab. "I know that she overheard me talking about drugs a couple of times," Mary Beth says. "I hope that didn't set her back in some way." Then I tell her that Jeff from art class had been put on suicide watch after his arrest, and for the first time I see her blanch. "I didn't know any of that," she says flatly.

By now I have spoken with plenty of Milford students, all of whom know exactly what they would say to Mary Beth if given the chance. They'd say, "Why? Why us?" But I am more curious to know what Mary Beth would say to them, to guys like Jeff or Bryan, who took her in as a friend and paid dearly for hooking her up with a bag of weed. And so I ask her just that, and there is a pause. It takes a few moments, and then, suddenly, the girl inside the promising young undercover agent begins to emerge. Mary Beth looks up at the ceiling. She twirls her hair. She lets out a nervous giggle and swivels in her office chair. And there she is, 17 again, the teenager I had heard about, the one they called Mary Jane.

"I don't know what I'd say to them," she says finally. "I really don't know."

L. CHRISTOPHER SMITH is a writer living in Brooklyn. This is his first piece for GQ.